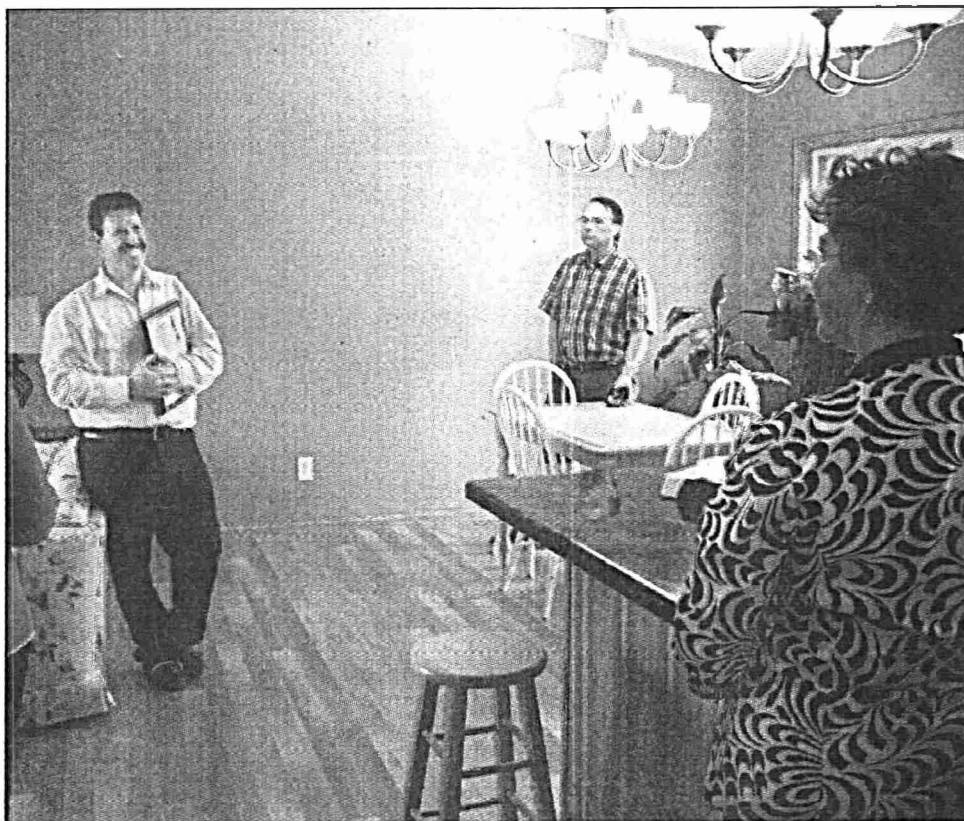


home sweet home



Echo Press photo by Celeste Beam

Lance Boudin (left), who is standing in his new home in Carlos, was recognized Wednesday during a special June Homeownership Month event sponsored by USDA Rural Development.

By Celeste Beam

Staff Reporter

Lance Boudin of Carlos feels blessed and gives most of the credit to God for who he is today.

Boudin also credits Him for where he is today – living in a newly constructed home; a home he never dreamed he would ever have.

"I am standing in a house that I am paying for," Boudin said of his home on 8th Street in Carlos. "I feel like I got a Porsche for a Volkswagen

price."

Boudin moved into his new home on May 1 and has already made his first house payment.

"It was exciting," he said. "I felt very proud."

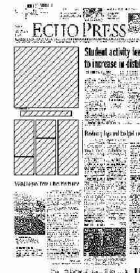
The reason for Boudin's excitement now is because in 2003, he was convicted of a felony-level crime and incarcerated in the state prison system in Red Wing.

In 2005, he was allowed to take part in the work release program – Institutional Community Work Crew (ICWC), a state program under the

direction of the Minnesota Department of Corrections. Through this program, Boudin helped to build houses similar to the one he is living in today. The homes were built throughout the state, including some in Douglas County.

While building one of the homes, Boudin expressed an interest in owning one himself one day.

On Wednesday, Boudin was recognized during a special June Homeownership Month event at his house sponsored by



USDA Rural Development. Boudin became a homeowner because of the USDA Rural Development's direct home loan program, along with the West Central Minnesota Communities Action (WCMCA) program.

The recognition ceremony included representatives from USDA Rural Development, WCMCA, State Representative Mary Ellen Otremba and Toni Merdan from Representative Collin Peterson's office.

Boudin's home was built through a partnership with WCMCA, which uses minimum-security labor to build homes in the area. The program serves as rehabilitation and job skill training for inmates, such as Boudin,

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Everyone has a plan in life

who served in the program a few years ago. In fact, two of the homes he helped build are in Carlos and in close proximity to his own home.

Besides God, Boudin also credits the WCMCA program for helping him to turn his life around. Two key people from WCMCA who he gave thanks to were Mike Payson and Jennifer Kangas.

He met the two in 2007, which is when he told Kangas he wanted to own his own home. That is what got the ball rolling.

Boudin said through twists and turns of fate and through the work of God, he ended up in Douglas County. He is originally from the North Branch area.

While working for the ICWC, Boudin met the owner of New Millennium Cabinets in Alexandria, Brian Springer, who gave him the opportunity to have a job.

At the time he decided to move forward with getting the loans to build his house, Boudin was laid off.

"I had a conversation with God and told him if this was meant to be, I needed to find a job," Boudin explained.

Three days later, he got a job at Standard Iron. After three months, he was laid off – again.

Luckily, Boudin said he had put money away, but found out that in order to take part in the WCMCA program and to receive funds from the USDA program, he needed to have a job.

After another conversation with God, he said, Boudin met a woman at his church and about two days later, he received word that he could start working at Bistro to Go.

"I have been there ever since," he said of his newest job.

"I asked God if he wanted me to be here, he needed to help and he did," said Boudin. "I couldn't have done this without Him and without the help from a lot of other people."

Although humble and modest about giving credit to himself, Boudin noted that people have to have the will to change, which he did.

However, God received most of his credit, along with the ICWC program, the people at WCMCA and the people at USDA Rural Development.

"God has a plan for everyone, you just have to submit yourself," he concluded.

For more information about USDA Rural Development, visit its website at www.rurdev.usda.gov/mn.

For more information about West Central Minnesota Communities Action, visit its website at www.wcmca.org.